

What Do You Think?

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Representative
Geoff Simpson

PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600



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I'd like to hear your views on a few subjects to help me focus my efforts in Olympia.

- What do you think of state government's efforts to keep Boeing building planes in Washington? What should be done differently?

- Do you think our health care system needs a major overhaul, major reforms, minor reforms or no reforms? What changes do you think would help the most?

- Are you concerned about the integrity of electronic voting machines with no auditable paper ballot?

- If you drive to work, how long do you spend in traffic each day? Has your commute gotten better, worse or remained the same this past year?

- Are there special trips (to the airport, downtown Seattle or Safeco Field) where you'd rather ride a train or bus than drive?

- Would you support or oppose a ban on smoking inside bars and restaurants and other public buildings?

- Other comments

Please detach and mail back to me at:

Rep. Geoff Simpson
PO Box 40600
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Olympia, WA 98504-0600



Representative
Geoff
Simpson



Issue Update

Dear neighbors,

It's a privilege to serve as your representative to the Legislature.

A big part of my job is keeping a dialogue with citizens — listening to your ideas and opinions, and keeping you informed about issues important to our schools and neighborhoods.

I believe democracy only works when citizens have the information they need to stand up and speak out. There are 940-some lobbyists in Olympia who know exactly how much that information is worth, and their power would disappear if more regular citizens took the time to get informed and involved. It's time to chase the money changers from the temple of our democracy.

A lot of major decisions happened this year in the Legislature — some good, some bad, some awful. All those decisions will affect our families for years.

Inside this newsletter, I'll tell you what happened with:

- Balancing the state budget
- Improving schools and colleges
- Unclogging traffic gridlock

I'm interested in what you think about the Legislature's decisions, and what we should do next session to tackle our common problems. How can we create jobs, prevent crime and protect our clean air and water?

Thank you again for the honor of serving as your representative. I'm back working in my job as a Kent firefighter while I'm not in Olympia. Now that I'm back home, I'm finding it a joy to talk to real people instead of lobbyists in \$2,000 suits. Feel free to contact me by mail, phone or e-mail. I hope to hear from you.

Sincerely,
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Geoff Simpson".

Geoff Simpson
State Representative, 47th District

Keeping In Touch



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Issue Update

Balancing the state budget

We faced a \$2.6 billion hole in the state budget.

Back in January, it looked horrible, with Gov. Gary Locke proposing an all-pain budget that closed the gap with huge cuts to schools, kids and health care. Senate Republicans took a similar all-cuts approach.

I couldn't vote for a budget that told 40,000 kids they couldn't see their doctor, or a budget that actually costs taxpayers more by cutting off prenatal care for low-income pregnant moms.

The House budget kept the faith with voters by trying to fund the school initiatives (I-728 and I-732) to reduce overcrowded classes and give teachers better pay. It also kept faith with the initiative to give home-care workers a fair deal. Right now, they get close to minimum wage with no health care, and I know a lot of seniors couldn't get by without these folks.

While the House didn't win this fight, we moved the Governor and Senate to a more moderate budget that didn't have such draconian cuts to schools and health care.

Kids won't get kicked off health care, and pregnant moms will get prenatal care. Our education investment actually goes up 2 percent, and all beginning teachers will start out making \$30,000 a year. The problem is that most of our experienced teachers will actually get less than they did last year after you figure in inflation and additional health care costs.

We could have done better by closing corporate tax loopholes that don't do anything to create jobs or improve our economy and by asking the wealthiest in our state to pay more of a fair share. I will continue to seek solutions to reduce the tax burden on senior citizens and the middle class while honoring our commitments to children and education.



Improving schools and colleges

The real victory for education this session is in bricks and mortar. We're putting more money into building schools, colleges and universities.

Schools — For decades, the state paid less and less of the cost to build new schools while you paid more and more in local taxes to make up the difference. Part of this is because we used to fund schools with timber money, which was fine when we were a small state. But then our population boomed.

The capital budget we passed reverses the trend and puts more state money into building local schools. Our schools need it — too many kids are in crumbling, leaky schools or portables.

And this budget will save you money on your local property taxes. When a new high school gets built, citizens will save \$1.2 million in property taxes.

Colleges and Universities — The biggest graduating class of high school seniors in our state's history is coming in 2008, and we don't have room in our colleges. It's wrong to tell an entire generation of students that there's not enough room. A college degree is the surest ticket to the American Dream

This issue is critical for our economy because businesses today rely on brainpower, not horsepower.

I'm happy to tell you that we followed the vision of two former governors, Republican Dan Evans and Democrat Booth Gardner, who said we needed to fix this problem and make room for all those college students. The construction budget puts \$750 million into our colleges and universities.

Local projects — The capital budget also includes \$17 million in a variety of other projects for our district. The list includes:

- \$11 million for a computer technology center at Green River College
- \$2.4 million for a science building at Green River College
- \$1.2 million to expand the park system at Green River Gorge
- \$500,000 to buy land for Jenkins Creek Park in Covington
- \$456,000 for East Hill Park in Kent
- \$400,000 for a youth and family services facility on Kent's East Hill
- \$400,000 to buy additional land for Clark Lake Park
- \$275,660 to connect Morrill Meadows and East Hill Park
- \$250,000 to help build a Children's Therapy Center
- \$250,000 for the new Auburn YMCA
- \$241,203 to preserve historical Olson Farm in Auburn



Unclogging traffic gridlock

There's no bigger issue than traffic gridlock. Our district faces some of the worst traffic in the state, and it's strangling our prosperity and quality of life.



For 13 years, political gridlock in Olympia went hand-in-glove with traffic gridlock on I-167 and I-5. This session, we broke through and passed a real transportation plan.

As vice chairman of the Transportation Committee, I can tell you it wasn't easy. There are 98 members of the House, 49 senators and 147 opinions on how to fix transportation. We fought through all that to clean up the system and get it moving again.

First, we focused on reforms to make transportation more accountable and efficient. We passed measures to streamline the system and get projects done faster and cheaper.

Second, we passed a plan that put new money into highways, trains, vanpools and buses. The old way of doing things was every politician got their pork, whether their district had a traffic problem or not. This year, we had a strict rule: if a project didn't make highways safer and less clogged, we didn't fund it.

It's important to talk about safety for a second. Traffic accidents are the number one cause of injuries and deaths in our state. As a firefighter, I've been first on the scene to more wrecks than I care to remember, and seen too many people hurt and killed. You're three times more likely to get hurt or killed by a drunk or reckless driver than you are at the hands of a criminal, yet we spend pennies tackling this problem compared to what we spend on crime.

We need to put more of an emphasis on making roads and highways safe for our families. I'll keep working on this issue next session.

Fixing the presidential primary

Seven million dollars — that's how much of your taxpayer money it'd cost to run a presidential primary next year.

It's a waste of your money because the Republicans aren't using the primary and the Democrats are using a presidential caucus instead of the primary.

Since the political parties have decided not to count the primary election results in nominating their candidates, I support a special session of the Legislature to cancel next year's presidential primary and save taxpayers those seven million dollars.